WELLINGTON (Somerset)

URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL.

Annual Report For 1895,

BY

DR. J. MEREDITH

Medical Officer of Health.

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Medical Officer of Health.

January 16th, 1896.

Sir,—I have the honour to submit to the Urban Council my report of the health of the district for the year 1895.

As reported last year, I do not again deem it necessary to report regarding tke local industries, geological or topographical formations of the area

There is nothing of exceptional nature, from a sanitary point of view, to mark the course of last year beyond that the year commenced with unusually severe weather. As mentioned in my report of March 28th, there had been 60 days of continuous frost, and during that period influenza manifested itself in the place. Several infirm and aged people were attacked, and eight deaths, at least, were due to this disorder, as will be seen from the table of deaths forwarded herewith.

There were altogether 123 deaths during the year, 89 of them occurred during the first six months. Twenty were under one year of age, 11 were between one and five, four between five and 15, six between 15 and 25, 23 between 25 and 65, and 59 above 65 years.

As to causes of death, the year has been exceptional. As will be observed from the regular table, there has not been a death from any one of the infectious diseases; that is, taking them in their

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order–none from small-pox, scarlatina, diphtheria, membranous croup, typhus, enteric, continued, relapsing, or puerperal fever. None from cholera, erysipelas, measles or whooping cough. None from any sequelæ of them, as far as information has reached me.

Such an event has not happened before, since records have been kept, now over 20 years ago.

There were three deaths from diarrhœa and dysentery, none from rheumatic fever, ten from consumption, 26 from bronchitis, pneumonia, and pleurisy, five from heart disease, three from injuries, and 68 from all other complaints.

Of the 20 children who died under one year, eleven are certified as having been born prematurely, or so debilitated as not to possess a fair chance of surviving, while three more suffered from malformations and soon became debilitated and died; the remaining six sank from chest affections of one form or another.

The death rate per thousand inhabitants amounted to 16·63. Deducting the deaths of nine persons who were but recent arrivals into the the district and not belonging to it, the rate is 16·06.

There were 204 births during the year, which is a high average, equalling 28·75 per thousand people. As to the sexes, there were 99 males to 105 females, reversing in this instance the general experience of the country taken as a whole, in regard to the comparative proportion of the sexes at birth.

The weather reports have been regularly and punctually supplied, thanks to a competent contributor, and from them it will be observed that the rainfall has amounted to average, namely, 34 inches, but it was much under this until the latter part of the year.

The year 1894 was about five inches above the average.

There was considerable difficulty in many places in obtaining water during the severe frost of February. Water froze in the pipes in a number of places; but where these had been laid at a good depth from the surface, no difficulty was experienced.

Some wells were ordered to be closed last summer owing to the water in them being polluted and unfit for use, through badly made drains, and sewage-logged soil.

The Sanitary Inspector and I made our systematic inspections last year as on former occasions and the results were duly submitted to the Urban Council.

As the Council are aware, there is usually a marked sameness in these communications. We visited the bakers' and butchers' places in the district and called attention to what appeared to us to be defective or insanitary, as reported to the Council on the 25th April. Attention was called to nuisances arising from piggeries at a few places, but these complaints were not as numerous last year as during some former ones. Several instances of nuisances arising from defective closets were complained of. The old iron containers with lead D traps are not yet entirely cleared away from houses, though some were removed lately ; but not before they had been a source of dangerous annoyance. In July I reported that a nuisance arising from bad fish was complained of. A couple of men brought a quantity from Taunton, drove through the district offering, and in some cases selling the fish, but, thanks to the police, the article was seized and an order in due form was obtained for its destruction.

Several houses in Rockwell Green were inspected and found in a dirty and insanitary condition, and the necessary orders were issued and complied with to render them fitting places to reside in.

At Springfield several persons were found keeping stale and offensive pigwash, to the annoyance of themselves and their neighbours, and were ordered to remove the matter and abate the nuisance.

Some old houses were pulled down, and another in a dilapidated condition was repaired by order of the Council.

A new sewer has been constructed in the upper part of Rockwell Green, and a footpath has been made there also.

There have been 13 notifications sent in during last year. I did not think it expedient to advise closing the elementary school among whose pupils one of the infectious disorders chiefly prevailed. The only orders given were that all children living in an infected house should keep away from the school for a time and this proved sufficient. There is nothing in the character of the ailments notified calling for any extended notice.

The common lodging house was regularly inspected, but there is no record as to the number that resided there at different times of the year.

There has been a slight decrease in the number of tramps taking advantage of the casual ward, as compared with 1894. Then there were 2423, last year the number was 2186, a difference of 237.

I think it fitting to call attention to an element of danger which is increasing in our midst, that is, the great number of children who are unvaccinated. Happily there has been no threat of a small pox epidemic in the district for years. All the same a constant state of watchfulness has to be maintained in connection with vagrants. From the Registrar's returns I find that there are about 200 children who are above two months old, unvaccinated within the urban area. The falling off in this respect was greater last year than during any recent ones.

As usual I have had the Sanitary Inspector's report book before me in making my statements. I forward herewith the regular table of deaths and sickness.—Signed, J. Meredith, Medical Officer of Health.